

ECHO CHURCH

No Games. No Gimmicks. Just God.

What's in Front of You?

When People Become Bigger Than Presence

Mark 8:22–26 NKJV

Sunday, June 21, 2026 | Father's Day | Pastor Rich Saunders Jr.

Main Thought

Sometimes the miracle is happening right in front of us, but our focus is still locked on people, pressure, pain, and perception. The danger is not that God is absent. The danger is that we are too distracted to recognize Him.

Big Sermon Question

What is in front of you? Not just physically, but emotionally, spiritually, and interpretively. What has your attention, your energy, your obedience, your interpretation, and your focus?

Sermon Scriptures

Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him.

Mark 8:22 NKJV

So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

Mark 8:23 NKJV

And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."

Mark 8:24 NKJV

Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.

Mark 8:25 NKJV

Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

Mark 8:26 NKJV

Opening

Most of the time when we preach Mark 8:22-26, we focus on the man's vision going from blurry to clear. We talk about him seeing men like trees, walking, and we celebrate that Jesus touched him again until he saw clearly. And that is right.

But there is another question in the text that deserves our attention. Why did he see men before he recognized Jesus? The first thing he mentions after the touch is not the One who touched him. It is not Jesus. It is not the hand of God. It is not the miracle worker standing in front of him. He says, "I see men like trees, walking."

That sounds a lot like us. God can have His hand on our lives, His presence in our moment, His grace covering us, His mercy keeping us, His power restoring us, and still the first thing we focus on is people. Who left. Who stayed. Who hurt us. Who saw us. Who ignored us. Who approved us. Who misunderstood us.

The question of this text is not just, can you see clearly? The deeper question is, do you know what is really in front of you?

Historical Context

Mark 8 is a turning point in Jesus' ministry. Jesus has been teaching, healing, feeding multitudes, confronting religious blindness, and revealing the Kingdom of God. Right before this miracle, Jesus warns His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. They misunderstand Him because they are focused on bread, while Jesus is trying to teach them about spiritual perception.

In Mark 8:18, Jesus asks His disciples, "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?" That question sets the stage for the healing of the blind man. This miracle is not randomly placed. It is a living sermon. It shows physically what the disciples were struggling with spiritually.

The location is Bethsaida, a fishing village near the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida had seen the works of Jesus, but according to Matthew 11:21, it was also a place Jesus rebuked because many did not repent after seeing mighty works. That means this miracle happens in a place where people had evidence of God, but not always the right response to God.

That is important because many people today are not lacking evidence. They are lacking recognition. They have seen God keep them, provide for them, open doors, protect their mind, cover their family, and bring them out. Yet they still keep asking, where is God? And heaven is asking, how did you miss Me when My hand was right in front of you?

E1 People Can Bring You, But They Cannot Be Your Focus

Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him.

Mark 8:22 NKJV

The man does not bring himself. Other people bring him to Jesus. They begged Jesus to touch him. This is powerful because the man has no recorded vision and no recorded voice at the beginning of the text.

He does not speak. He does not ask. He does not explain. He does not advocate for himself. Other people speak for him. Sometimes your condition has been so normalized that you stop asking for more. Sometimes life has trained you to survive blind, move blind, depend blind, and exist blind.

But God will sometimes use the faith of somebody else to bring you into a moment you did not have language for yet. Some of us are standing in answered prayers we did not even know how to pray.

Here is the distinction. People brought him, but Jesus led him. People got him to the encounter, but Jesus took him into the process. There are people assigned to bring you to Jesus, but they are not assigned to be Jesus. They can bring you, but they cannot heal you. They can beg for you, but they cannot restore you. They can care about you, but they cannot become the center of your sight.

Be grateful for the people who brought you, but do not make them bigger than the God who touched you.

No Vision, No Voice, But Still Valuable

They brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand...

Mark 8:22–23 NKJV

Before this man ever speaks in the text, Jesus touches him. That means his silence did not disqualify him. He had no recorded request, but he still received divine attention. He had no visible direction, but he still received divine leadership. He had no voice in the room, but heaven still saw his need.

Sometimes we assume the only people God is moving for are the ones who know how to articulate everything. But there are seasons when you do not even know how to explain what is wrong. You know you are not whole. You know something is off. You know you cannot see like you should. You know life feels blurry. You know you need help. But you do not have the language yet.

The grace of this text is that Jesus does not wait for the man to have perfect language before He gives him personal leadership. Jesus can lead you even when you do not know how to explain where you are.

The man does not speak until after Jesus removes him from his last environment. In Bethsaida, he was the blind man. In the hands of Jesus, he became a man in process. The crowd knew his condition. Jesus knew his future. There are some environments where your condition has a name, but your future does not have room. So Jesus leads him out. Not because Jesus lacked power to heal him in Bethsaida. Jesus could have healed him right there. But the question is not, can Jesus fix you there? The question is, why would Jesus restore you in the same place that normalized your blindness?

He is not trying to fix you in the place of your hurt. He is trying to heal you in a place you have never seen.

E2 Trusting the Hand Before You See the Plan

So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town...

Mark 8:23 NKJV

This verse raises a question. How does a blind man trust the hand of someone he cannot see? The text does not tell us that this man knew Jesus personally. It does not tell us that he had a prior relationship with Him. It does not tell us that Jesus introduced Himself and explained the whole process.

All we know is this. The man was blind, Jesus took him by the hand, and the man followed. That means before the man ever received sight, he had to practice trust. Before he saw clearly, he had to walk obediently. Before Jesus opened his eyes, the man had to surrender his steps. Faith is not always having full vision. Sometimes faith is trusting the hand that is leading you when your eyes have not caught up yet.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding.

Proverbs 3:5 NKJV

This man could not lean on his sight because he had none. He could not lean on his understanding because Jesus had not explained everything. He could not lean on familiarity because Jesus was leading him away from the town. All he had was the hand.

Sometimes God will lead you into a season where He removes everything you normally lean on so you can learn to trust Him with all your heart. Not with all your sight. Not with all your understanding. Not with all your control. Not with all your explanations. With all your heart.

It is amazing how we can get into a rideshare with a person we do not know, in a car we do not own, following a route we are not controlling, trusting that this imperfect person is taking us to our destination. We will sit in the back seat and trust a stranger with a five-star rating, but struggle to trust the God who has never failed. We trust the app because it gives us a route. We trust the driver because they accepted the ride. We trust the process because we believe the system knows where we are going. But when it comes to God, we want control, confirmation, explanation, and evidence before we obey.

How is it that we can trust an imperfect person to take us across town, but struggle to trust the perfect God to lead us into purpose? If I can trust a stranger with my location, surely I can trust the Savior with my life.

God does not need you to see the whole route for Him to be leading you in the right direction.

Why Did Jesus Lead Him Out?

Jesus led him out of the town. This matters because Jesus could have healed him in the crowd. He could have healed him in front of everybody. He could have made it public, dramatic, and undeniable. But Jesus chooses privacy. Why? Because sometimes God is not just after a public miracle. He is after a personal restoration.

Bethsaida was familiar to him, but familiar does not always mean healthy. There are places that get used to you blind. There are places that benefit from you blind. There are places that only know how to relate to you blind. There are places where people have adjusted to your limitation so long that your healing would make them uncomfortable.

Jesus leads him out not because the crowd was stronger than Christ, but because the environment was not worthy of the process. Some healing is too sacred for the crowd that only came to spectate. Some restoration requires separation. Some clarity requires distance. Some vision requires leaving the voices that normalized your blindness.

Jesus was not just moving him geographically. He was moving him spiritually. He was moving him from dependence to trust, from survival to surrender, from being handled by people to being held by God, from a familiar place to a faith place.

Jesus can heal you anywhere, but He will not always heal you in front of everybody.

E3 If God Be Before Us, Why Are Men Still Bigger Than Him?

And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking."

Mark 8:24 NKJV

Now the sermon turns. Jesus led him. Jesus touched him. Jesus had His hands on him. Jesus brought him away from the town. Jesus was standing in front of him. But when the man begins to see, the first thing he mentions is men.

That raises another question. Why didn't he look at the One who led him away? Why did he mention men before Jesus? That sounds like us. God leads us out. God protects us. God covers us. God keeps us. God puts His hand on our lives. God moves us away from what was killing our focus. But when we start talking, we still talk about people first. People who hurt us. People who left us. People who misunderstood us. People who did not support us. People who did not see us. People who did not clap. People who did not come. People who changed.

The question is not just, can you see? The question is, why are men still the first thing you mention after Jesus touched you? Sometimes the first thing you see reveals the last thing you were delivered from.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:31 NKJV

Romans says, if God is for us, who can be against us? But for the purpose of this message, we can also hear the question this way. If God is before us, why are men still bigger than Him? If God is standing in front of me, why is my fear louder? If God is standing in front of me, why is my offense clearer? If God is standing in front of me, why is my disappointment larger? If God is standing in front of me, why is my need for approval stronger? If God is standing in front of me, why am I still letting people determine what I believe about my future?

The man says, I see men like trees. Trees are tall. Trees are large. Trees are rooted. Trees can block your view. That is what people become when your vision is blurred. Their opinions look taller than they are. Their rejection looks stronger than it is. Their absence looks more permanent than it is. Their voice looks more rooted than it is.

Romans 8:31 reminds us that the presence of God changes the size of opposition. That does not mean no one will be against you. It means no one against you is greater than the God who is for you. The problem is not that men were present. The problem is that men were distorted. Jesus does not heal the man so he can ignore people. He heals him so he can see people correctly. Because when you do not see God clearly, you will not see people correctly. You will either make people too big or too small. You will idolize them or demonize them. You will depend on them or despise them. You will chase their approval or live trapped by their rejection.

When God is before you, what is against you loses the right to define you.

God does not restore your vision so you can stop seeing people. He restores your vision so people stop blocking Him.

E4 Jesus Does Not Just Fix Sight; He Corrects Focus

Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly.

Mark 8:25 NKJV

Jesus touches him again. This does not mean Jesus failed the first time. It reveals that Jesus is patient enough to finish what He started. The text says Jesus made him look up. That is powerful. The issue was not just his sight. It was his focus.

This is the only recorded healing in Mark that happens in stages. Mark places it right before Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ. That matters because the disciples are also seeing in stages. They see something about Jesus, but they do not yet see Him fully.

There are seasons where God has to touch us again, not because His power was weak, but because our focus is still divided. Jesus does not just restore vision. He redirects attention. He made him look up.

Some of us do not need another sign. We need another focus. We do not need more evidence. We need a lifted perspective. We do not need God to prove Himself again. We need to stop making people larger than His presence. Look up from the offense. Look up from the comparison. Look up from the disappointment. Look up from the people who misunderstood you. Look up from the pressure to prove yourself. Look up from the thing that keeps stealing your attention.

The second touch was not just about clearer sight. It was about corrected focus.

Clarity comes when your focus is lifted.

E5 Do Not Go Back to What Made You Blind

Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

Mark 8:26 NKJV

Jesus sends the man home, but He tells him not to go back into the town. This is not just a travel instruction. It is a protection instruction. Jesus is saying, do not return to the environment I just brought you out of.

Bethsaida was a place exposed to miracles but resistant in response. Jesus had already performed works in and around that region, yet the city remained spiritually dull. Some places are familiar, but they are not healthy for your restored vision. Some environments will celebrate your blindness because it keeps you dependent. Some circles will tolerate the old you better than they can handle the healed you. Some towns know how to manage your dysfunction, but they do not know how to honor your deliverance.

Restored vision requires protected direction. Some people receive clarity, but then return to the same conversations, same mindsets, same circles, same habits, and same environments that distorted their view in the first place. Jesus is not being harsh. He is being protective.

When God restores your sight, do not return to what trained your blindness.

The miracle is not complete if your eyes are open but your path is unchanged.

Practical Application for Today

Today, men like trees may look like people's opinions becoming larger than God's Word. It may look like offense becoming louder than obedience, social media becoming more influential than Scripture, or comparison becoming stronger than contentment. It may look like pain becoming more visible than God's presence, the need for validation becoming bigger than the voice of God, or church hurt becoming the lens through which every spiritual thing is interpreted. It may look like pressure making you forget provision, or fear making you forget faithfulness.

The question is not whether those things are real. The question is, have they become so large that you can no longer recognize Jesus standing in front of you?

Blurred vision is when men become trees. Blurred vision is when people become larger than presence. Blurred vision is when the ones God used become bigger than the God who sent them. Blurred vision is when who hurt you is more visible than who held you. Blurred vision is when who left is louder than the One who stayed.

Echo Church, this is the heart of who we are. No Games. No Gimmicks. Just God. We are not chasing a crowd, an image, or applause in Fayetteville. We are learning to look up until the One who touched us is bigger than everything that ever blocked our view.

Declaration Moment

I will not make men bigger than God. I will not make opposition bigger than obedience. I will not make rejection bigger than restoration. I will not make pain bigger than presence. I will not make what is against me bigger than the God who is for me. If God is for me, who can be against me? And if God is before me, I cannot let men block my view.

Quote

The first thing you see after God touches you reveals what still has influence over your focus. Jesus is not just opening your eyes. He is reducing the size of what used to block your view.

Closing Point

The man came to Jesus blind. He left seeing clearly. But the journey to clarity required him to be led, touched, honest, touched again, lifted, and redirected. That is the journey for many believers. God is not just trying to open your eyes. He is trying to restore your focus. Because when your focus is wrong, people look bigger than they are. Problems look stronger than they are. Pain looks permanent when it is not. And God can be standing right in front of you while you are still talking about men.

But today, Jesus is making us look up. Look up from people. Look up from pressure. Look up from pain. Look up from what happened. Look up from who left. Look up from who misunderstood. Look up from who did not see your value. The One who touched you is still in front of you. And when you see Him clearly, you will see everything else correctly.

The question is not just, can you see? The question is, what are you seeing first? Because if Jesus is in front of you, but men are all you can mention, your eyes may be opening, but your focus still needs healing.

So Lord, touch us again. Not because You failed the first time, but because we are ready to stop making people bigger than Your presence. We want to see clearly. We want to see You. We want to see life through You. We want to see people correctly because we finally see You rightly.

What's in front of you? If God is for you, who can be against you? And if God is before you, do not let men block your view.
